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Cc:

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING
JUNE 14, 2012

I. CALL TO ORDER

Mark Deming, Chairman, called the regular meeting of the Economic Development Commission to order on Thursday, June 14, 2012 at 7:30 a.m. in the Main Meeting Room at the Town Offices. The following members were also present: Allan R. Raphael and Kris Barnett. Also in attendance was Lisa Heavner, Board of Selectmen, Gerry Wetjen, Director of Culture, Parks and Recreation, and other interested parties.

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES - May

The Commission was unable to vote on the minutes, as there was not a quorum.

III. REPORTS; SMSP & FVVA

SMSP - Rich Correia, President SMSP, provided an update to the Commission. He began by reporting that the ArtWalk Simsbury was a big success. He then spoke about the Annual Awards Ceremony for CT Main Street Center and congratulated Hiram Peck, Town Planner, for the award he received and others recognized at the ceremony. Mr. Correia mentioned the work SMSP is doing to coordinate the vendors for the Talcott Mountain Music Festival. He spoke about the work SMPS is doing, in coordination with local lodging, in preparation for the Junior Olympic Trials coming to the area later this month. Mr. Correia also spoke of the work SMSP is doing to prepare for the Pinchot Documentary and the large event, to be held on September 6th, for the world premier of the PBS documentary. Mr. Correia then reminded everyone about the Taste of Simsbury, to be held on August 30th, and that TDBank is the major sponsor again. He then invited any members of the EDC to come with him, and Sara Nielsen, to the Canton Economic Development Commission in July to speak about their Main Street Program. Mr. Deming asked Mr. Correia to email the members with the details as a reminder.

FVVA - Nancy Anstey was not in attendance at the meeting.

IV. SIMSBURY FARMS COMPLEX - Presentation by Gerry Wetjen

Mr. Deming introduced Gerry Wetjen, Director of Culture, Parks and Recreation, who began his presentation by stating to the Commission that Simsbury Farms is one of the most unique recreational facilities in the country, offering a wide variety of activities. He said these different services are revenue sources for the Town. Mr. Wetjen said he has had conversations with Mary Glassman, First Selectmen, about changing the accounting system to an Enterprise Fund. Mr. Wetjen stated the largest income generator at the Complex is the golf course and he believes if they operate the facility as a business, they could generate more revenue, in turn providing more services to the town. He said he has looked at other municipalities that have chosen to run their recreation facility as a separate Enterprise Fund, which enables it to operate as a business. He spoke of the difficulties the current accounting system presents with regards to the Farms. Mr. Wetjen stated the Enterprise Fund would allow the Farms to operate on a Jan 1 - Dec 31 FY. He then gave some details about revenue generation from the Farms and how the system is currently run. Mr. Wetjen stated that under the current system, the Board of Finance continually blocks the Farms from getting new equipment needed, but if they run under the Enterprise Fund, it runs automatic from the budget cycle and runs as a business. This way, Mr. Wetjen said, it can reinvest its capital back into improving the course/facilities. He spoke of the competition the golf course runs up against in the immediate area and the challenges the Farms faces in terms of drawing new play to the golf course. He then reviewed the accounting over past years with the Commission and the problems that come along with the current accounting system. Mr. Wetjen then compared those numbers with a scenario showing if they had used the Enterprise Fund. Mr. Wetjen told the Commission of greens that need to be rebuilt, issues with the tee boxes, the under-staffing and problems with the course being too short for the increased length of golfers. He spoke about how this new accounting would help them reinvest capital to improve the golf course. Ms. Barnett asked if they change to this new accounting system and the golf course is turning a profit every year, is that what was intended when this land was deeded to the Town. Mr. Wetjen again said that the purpose would be to reinvest that money into the course. The history of the Complex was discussed further by Mr. Wetjen and the Commission members. Mr. Wetjen said the current deficiencies cannot be remedied, due to the strict budget guidelines, and therefore, there will be less and less revenue going forward. Mr. Deming asked about how the Town would make up these lost funds if the Farms moved to this Enterprise Fund. Mr. Wetjen described how a percentage of the net operating income would be given back to the Town to cover some of those lost funds. Mr. Wetjen said he is currently in discussion with Ms. Glassman about this issue. The details on how this would work was discussed further by Mr. Wetjen and Mr. Deming. The topic of debt repayment, incurred by recent upgrades to the Complex, was discussed by Ms. Barnett and Mr. Wetjen. Mr. Deming asked if they had any

projections on the level of play if they were able to make the desired upgrades. Mr. Douglas Beach, Golf Course Architect, spoke further about some of the capital improvements they would make and how it would increase play and business, but he did not have any specific projections. Mr. Wetjen also spoke about increasing efforts to introduce golf to a younger generation to promote growth and future play. The subject of establishing and utilizing a 501(c)(3) was also discussed and then the process of establishing the Enterprise Fund was reviewed further by Mr. Wetjen.

Mr. Deming asked Ms. Heavner discussed the option of the Enterprise Fund and the potential impact on the tax payers of this option. Ms. Heavner said it is a good thing to look at this for analysis, but the numbers need to be comprehensive so a full picture can be presented. Mr. Deming said he would get the information out to the other Commissioners and they would discuss it further at the next meeting to get feedback from the full Commission. Mr. Beach just added, in closing, that he goes out to watch the High School players and sees how far they hit the ball which just illustrates the need for the course improvements. He also mentioned the high level of competition in the area again.

V. OLD BUSINESS/NEW BUSINESS

Ms. Heavner addressed the Commission spoke about their meeting with Ron Angelo, Deputy Commissioner of the Connecticut Department of Economic and Community Development. She said while it was a great meeting, she was disappointed at the low turn-out for the meeting, which she sees as a lost opportunity for some small business owners. Ms. Heavner said they are currently looking at best practices with regards to Town websites. She spoke about some inefficiencies with the currently layout and spoke about the goal of making it more user-friendly. She asked the Commission members to think about this topic and provide any feedback they might have. She spoke about training for the Department heads to enable them to load information on the site.

Mr. Deming asked the Commission members to look at their schedules and get back to him, via email, on whether or not they would be able to attend a July or August meeting.

VI. ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Deming adjourned the regular meeting of the EDC at 8:46AM.